

Capital's Current Whodunit



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George N. Briggs

WASHINGTON, Jan. 20.—The Capital's current whodunnit, temporarily entitled *The Case of the Forged Hopkins Letter*, achieved a new degree of bafflement today with the "disappearance" of George N. Briggs, \$5000-a-year assistant to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes.

Briggs, whom Ickes suspended without pay Tuesday pending solution of the riddle, dropped out of sight just as the Federal Grand Jury was about to send him a subpoena. There were hints that Briggs was just the man to tell who wrote the letter in which Harry Hopkins was purported to have said that Wendell Willkie would be the 1944 GOP Presidential candidate.

Ickes, who spent 50 minutes before the Grand Jury, confirmed reports that Briggs could not be found but wouldn't express any opinion as to why he had vanished. He described Briggs as "a good writer and research man" and said, in response to a query that Briggs

had never expressed his views concerning FDR in Ickes' hearing.

Henry Schweinhaut, Justice Dept. attorney in charge of the probe, added his bit to the confusion by stating: "I have no reason to believe that Briggs is missing." After that, reporters caught up with a sister-in-law of Briggs who said all that happened was that Briggs and his wife went to spend a few days with "some friends in Maryland."

Meanwhile, the United Press was told, by unidentified informants, that technical experts of the FBI were of the opinion that the "Hopkins letter" was written on a machine found in Briggs' outer office.

And Nelson Sparks, former Akron Mayor, who started the rumpus by publishing the disputed letter in his book *One Man—Wendell Willkie*, passed through New York on his way to Washington for a possible third session with the Grand Jury. Sparks said he would "have something to say" later.